THE Shadow®

THE LAST ILLUSION



CULLEN BUNN | GIOVANNI TIMPANO

DYNAMITE®

THE Shadow®

THE LAST ILLUSION



THE Shadow®

THE LAST ILLUSION

WRITTEN BY

CULLEN BUNN

ILLUSTRATED BY

COLTON WORLEY

(Issue 0)

GIOVANNI TIMPANO

(Issues 1-5)

COLORS BY

MARC RUEDA

(Issue 0)

MARCO LESKO

(Issues 1-5)

LETTERS BY

ROB STEEN

(Issues 0-1)

SIMON BOWLAND

(Issues 2-5)

COVER ART BY

GABRIEL HARDMAN

(Issue 0)

BUTCH GUICE

(Issues 1-5)

COVER COLORS BY

JORDAN BOYD

(Issue 0)

ALEX GUIMARÃES

(Issues 1-5)

SPECIAL THANKS TO

JERRY BIRENZ, ANTHONY TOLLIN AND MICHAEL USLAN

BOOK DESIGN BY

CATHLEEN HEARD





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DYNAMITE®

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ART BY GABRIEL HARDMAN | COLORS BY JORDAN BOYD

FOR MOST, THE CHAINS OF *MORTALITY* ARE TOO *EASILY* CAST ASIDE.

...CROSS THE WRONG PERSON...

...WANDER INTO THE WRONG PART OF TOWN...

...FAIL TO LOOK BOTH WAYS BEFORE CROSSING THE STREET...

...OR MAKE ANY NUMBER OF *ALL-TOO-EASY* MISSTEPS...

...AND LIFE MIGHT BE *SNUFFED* AS QUICKLY AS A *CANDLE FLAME.*

BUT FOR SOME-LIKE *MYSELF*- THE SHACKLES HOLD FAST...

...EVEN WHEN WE *DANCE* UPON THE *THIN LINE* BETWEEN THIS WORLD AND THE *NEXT.*

AND SO I *PURSUE* THAT WHICH MOST STRUGGLE SO FITFULLY TO *EVADE.*

FOR TO BECOME A *SHADOW...*

...ONE MUST FIRST PASS THE THRESHOLD OF *DEATH*.

NEW YORK, NEW YORK.
1925.

:TSK:

SKREEK

WELL.

THAT WAS... *UNINSPIRING.*

YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE TO WORK MUCH HARDER, *LAMONT*, IF YOU'RE TO LEARN HOW TO FREE YOURSELF.

IF...I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER, HARRY...

...I'D THINK YOU WERE TRYING TO *KILL* ME.

THAT WOULD BE A *GRAND ADVENTURE*, WOULDN'T IT?

HEH.

LET'S GO *AGAIN*, SHALL WE?

TO ESCAPE THIS CELL, I HAD TO HOLD MY BREATH FOR *THREE MINUTES.*

IT WILL TAKE *TIME* FOR YOU TO *CONDITION* YOURSELF, I'M SURE.

LUCKILY, WE HAVE *ALL DAY.*

SPLOOSH

LOS ANGELES. 1936

THERE'S A REASON, I'VE FOUND, *MAGICIANS* GUARD THEIR *SECRETS* SO *FIERCELY*.

ARTIER'S

Baldwin PIANOS

A SECRET IS MUCH LIKE AN *ESCAPE ARTIST*...

...AND SHOULD IT EVER SLIP AWAY, IT BECOMES SOMETHING ENTIRELY *DIFFERENT*.

THE SIMPLE ACT OF ESCAPE *CHANGES* IT...

...MAKES IT MORE DIFFICULT TO *CONTROL*.

C-CLICK

SCRRRRRR

THE *SOCIETY OF UNITED MAGICIANS*, A GUILD OF CONJURERS, ILLUSIONISTS, AND ESCAPE ARTISTS, CONTROLS A GOOD MANY SECRETS.

BUT THEY WANT *MORE*.

CH-CLICK

WHA?

A TRAP DOOR–

SHWUMP

AND IN PROTECTING THEIR MYSTERIES...

RRRRRRRRRRRRR

...THE SOCIETY ACTIVELY *DISCOURAGES* VISITORS.

RRRRR

GRRRAAAAW!

PERHAPS... MY NEW FRIEND...

...YOU JUST NEED A LITTLE *GUIDANCE.*

GRRAAAWW!

LIKE SO!

RRRRRRRRRRRR

BLAM

P-TING

SLAM

LET'S NOT DO THAT AGAIN ANYTIME SOON, SHALL WE?

I'M CURIOUS IF THIS IS HOW THE SOCIETY WELCOMES *UNWANTED* GUESTS...

...OR IF THIS IS SOME TWISTED *GAME* WITH WHICH THEY CHALLENGE THEIR MEMBERS.

1925.

GIVEN TIME... GIVEN TRAINING...

...*ANYONE* CAN LEARN HOW TO ESCAPE...

...TO BREAK AWAY ...TO SLIP FREE.

BUT...WHEN THE *PRESSURE* IS ON...THAT IS A BEAST OF A DIFFERENT COLOR.

SUCH A FEAT REQUIRES THAT ONE LOOK INTO THE *ABYSS* OF *CERTAIN DEATH*...

...AND NOT *FLINCH*.

SCORPIONS, HARRY? REALLY?

YOU DO KNOW THAT THIS BREED IS RELATIVELY *SAFE*.

VERY LITTLE *VENOM* IN THEIR STING.

TELL ME, LAMONT.

AS THEY CLIMBED TOWARD YOUR FACE, DID THEIR LACK OF VENOM CROSS YOUR MIND *EVEN ONCE?*

BY NOW YOU MUST REALIZE THAT WHEN IT COMES TO PERFORMING, A FLAIR FOR THE *DRAMATIC* WORKS WONDERS.

THIS TIME, LET'S TRY *UPSIDE DOWN.*

GRAVITY...THE BLOOD RUSHING TO YOUR HEAD...CAN AFFECT YOUR *THINKING.*

UNKNOWN TERRITORY CAN FEEL *SURREAL...*

...UNSETTLING.

MY... *MISSION*...WILL BE AN *ARDUOUS* ONE, AND I'VE GONE TO GREAT LENGTHS TO *PREPARE* MYSELF.

I'VE HONED MY MIND TO ITS *PEAK.*

I CAN'T IMAGINE A SHIFT IN POINT OF VIEW WILL BE *TOO* TAXING.

THAT'S GOOD TO KNOW.

THEN YOU WON'T MIND TERRIBLY WHEN I SET THE ROPE ON *FIRE*, HMM?

AFTER ALL...

1936.

"...WHAT FUN IS LIFE WITHOUT A FEW SURPRISES?"

THE MINDS OF MAGICIANS ARE *WILD* WITH CREATIVITY.

IT WAS THIS IMAGINATION THAT LED ME TO SEEK HOUDINI'S *TUTELAGE*.

SK-CHUNK

CLICK

BUT IN THIS CASE...

...THE CREATIVITY HAS GONE HORRIBLY *AWRY*.

THE SOCIETY NOT ONLY HAS SOMETHING TO HIDE...

...BUT IT IS A *SAFE BET* THEY HAVE *SKELETONS* HIDDEN SOMEWHERE.

OR *BODIES* BURIED IN *SHALLOW GRAVES.*

SHRRRRRRRK

MORE LIKELY, THOUGH, FED TO A RAVENOUS TIGER.

MINE, HOWEVER, SHALL NOT BE ONE OF THEM.

TWO STAGES SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATED IN WHATEVER GAUNTLET THE SOCIETY HAS LAID BEFORE ME.

HOW MANY MORE BEFORE I METE OUT *JUSTICE* UPON THEIR WICKED SOULS?

1925.

CLICK

"SUCCESS COMES IN STAGES...

"OVERCOMING ONE OBSTACLE...

RATTLE... SHUNK

"...DOESN'T MEAN YOU HAVE ACHIEVED YOUR GOAL.

"WITH EVERY LOCK YOU PICK...

SWOOSH

"...THE NEXT ONE REVEALED...

"...IS MORE CHALLENGING.

"THE CONDITIONS MORE DIFFICULT.

"YOU MUST LEARN TO OVERCOME **WHATEVER** LIES BEFORE YOU.

"THE **CHALLENGES** YOU FACE WILL GROW.

"IT IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE THE RIGHT TOOLS..."

SPLASH

...BUT ALL THE TRAINING AND PLANNING IN THE WORLD CANNOT PREPARE YOU FOR THE ***COMPLETE UNKNOWN.***

I WONDER, LAMONT.

IF...RATHER THAN BEING EXPELLED ONTO THE WET FLOOR...YOU HAD BEEN CAST INTO THE ***HEREAFTER...***

...WOULD YOU HAVE BEEN ***READY?***

I SUPPOSE THAT'S SOMETHING...

1936.

"...THAT EVEN THE GREAT HOUDINI CANNOT TEACH ME."

THIS SOCIETY IS A *TWISTED REFLECTION* OF THE ONE HARRY STARTED.

A *SELF-SERVING* GROUP WHICH SPLINTERED OFF FROM HIS BENEVOLENT ONE.

THAT THEY WOULD SEEK ANSWERS AT ANY COST WOULD TROUBLE HARRY.

THAT THEY WOULD HARM BESS TO DO SO *TROUBLES* ME.

HONESTLY, BESS.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU KNOWN US?

YOU KNOW WE ARE ALL *GENTLEMEN*. WE HAVE NO DESIRE TO INFLICT *VIOLENCE* UPON YOU...

...BUT WE *WILL* HAVE ANSWERS.

OBVIOUSLY, MY *HUSBAND* HAD *NOTHING* TO SAY TO YOU.

THEREFORE, I HAVE NOTHING TO SAY TO YOU NOW, OR EV--

SLAP

NOW... MY DEAR BESS.

ARE YOU *CERTAIN* YOUR HUSBAND DOES NOT HAVE A *MESSAGE* FOR US?

I AM THE SHADOW.

I KNOW WHAT *EVIL* LURKS WITHIN THE *HEARTS* OF MEN.

YOUR LITTLE *CABAL* SEEKS THAT WHICH IS *FORBIDDEN*.

BUT I CAN SPEED YOU ON YOUR JOURNEY TO *ENLIGHTENMENT!*

KRASH

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

PICK A CARD.

ANY CARD.

THUNK

THIP TH-THIP SHRIP THIP

BLAM

BLAM

BLAM

THESE ARE NO *MERE* TRICKS.

THEY ARE DEADLY AND CRUEL.

MAGICIANS' RUSES TURNED INTO *WEAPONS*.

CHING LING FOO WAS KNOWN FOR PERFORMING THE *LINKING RINGS*...

PLAYING CARDS *SHARPER* THAN KNIVES...

MAGIC RINGS THAT LASH OUT WITH *DEADLY FORCE*.

...BUT I HAVE MY OWN *FLAIR* WITH THEM.

CH-CHINK-CH-CHINK-CH-CHINK-CHINK

BLAM

PTCHING

THRAK

HSSSSSS

MISDIRECTION... STARTLING EVEN ME...

...AS MY OWN WEAPON TURNS TO SERPENTS AND FLOWERS!

NOT SO *FEARSOME* ONCE YOU'VE BEEN *UNARMED*, EH?

CLOUDING THE MINDS OF MEN IS MUCH MORE THAN *ILLUSION.*

STAB

HE... HE'S *GONE!*

THE POWER OF THE *GIRASOL* IS POWER BEYOND COMPREHENSION.

BEYOND THE UNDERSTANDING OF EVEN THE BRIGHTEST...

...EVEN THE MOST ADEPT *MENTALISTS.*

SLEIGHT OF HAND CANNOT SAVE YOU FROM MY *JUSTICE.*

SNAP

THE SOCIETY OF UNITED MAGICIANS IS NOT DEFEATED HERE TONIGHT!

WE HAVE WAITED TOO LONG! WE HAVE ENDURED TOO MUCH!

WE WILL HAVE THAT WHICH WE DESIRE!

IF NOT TODAY--

--THEN SOON!

PAFF

YOU MIGHT ESCAPE TODAY...

...BUT A VANISHING ACT WILL NOT PROTECT YOU FOREVER.

UNNNNN

COME, BESS.

IT IS TIME WE TOOK OUR LEAVE OF THIS DEADLY HOUSE OF CARDS.

SHHHRK-BOOM

THE KNICKERBOCKER

IT WAS *HARRY*, LAMONT.

HE CONTACTED ME JUST A FEW DAYS AGO... JUST AS HE *PROMISED* HE WOULD.

HE REACHED OUT FROM *BEYOND* THE *VEIL*... AND HE TOLD ME...

...OH, THE *THINGS* HE TOLD ME!

THE SOCIETY...

...THEY'RE *DESPERATE* TO FIND OUT THE SECRETS HARRY HAS LEARNED FROM THE OTHER SIDE.

THEY WOULD HAVE *KILLED* ME IF YOU HADN'T--

WHAT *SECRETS?*

WHAT DID HARRY TELL YOU?

SHRA-THOOM

YOU'RE RIGHT, BESS.

MEN WILL *KILL* FOR THIS KNOWLEDGE.

YOUR LIFE WILL BE IN GREAT DANGER...

PERHAPS IT WOULD BE BEST IF YOU...

...SIMPLY *FORGET.*

EVERY DAY, THE *STRUGGLE* BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH *RAGES*.

TONIGHT THE STRUGGLE ENDED FOR SOME.

BUT THERE ARE *GREATER STRUGGLES*...AND *DEEPER SECRETS*...AWAITING US...

...SECRETS NO LIVING SOUL SHOULD KNOW, BUT MANY WOULD *MURDER* TO POSSESS.

PERHAPS THE STRUGGLES OF THIS WORLD ARE JUST ONE OF *MANY* THAT WE ALL ENDURE.

PERHAPS...DEATH IS JUST THE *BEGINNING*...

...BUT THE *TRUE CHALLENGE* IS IN WHAT COMES *NEXT*.



ISSUE #1



ART BY BUTCH GUICE | COLORS BY ALEX GUIMARÃES

COUGH
COUGH

MR. CARLINI, YOUR BODY IS *VERY* CLOSE TO GIVING OUT ON YOU.

DO YOU HAVE ANY NEXT OF KIN YOU WANT ME TO CONTACT? *CHILDREN?*

LOOK AROUND YOU, *FOOL.*

MY ENTIRE *LIFE* HAS BEEN *DEDICATED* TO MY *CRAFT.*

MR. CARLINI--

DON'T YOU *DARE* CONDESCEND TO ME.

YOU ALREADY COLLECTED YOUR *DEATH WAGES* FROM ME.

MAKE SURE TO LEAVE TWO PIECES OF *SILVER* SO I CAN PAY *CHARON* AT THE *RIVER STYX.*

IT IS UNLIKELY THAT YOU WILL LIVE THROUGH THE NIGHT.

MY DUTIES AS YOUR DOCTOR REQUIRE ME TO CHECK ON YOU AND DOCUMENT YOUR DEATH, BUT I DON'T HAVE TO STAY IN THE HOME OF A MAN WITH SO LITTLE REGARD FOR OTHERS.

I SHALL RETURN IN THE MORNING FOR YOUR *BODY.*

CARLINI THE *CURMUDGEON* IS MORE LIKE IT.

DOCTOR!

WHO--

WHO ARE YOU?

WHO WE ARE IS OF NO CONCERN TO ONE SUCH AS YOU.

YOUR *SERVICES* ARE NO LONGER REQUIRED HERE.

COUGH COUGH

GEORGE...

DON'T TRY AND *CODDLE* ME, FRITZ.

WE BOTH KNOW WHY YOU ARE HERE.

ARE YOU *PREPARED* FOR YOUR TASK?

I AM... READY.

HOUDINI CANNOT BE THE ONLY ONE WHO FINDS THE ANSWERS FROM *BEYOND* THE GRAVE.

COUGH COUGH

THE SOCIETY OF UNITED MAGICIANS *MAY* HAVE FAILED BEFORE, BUT I AM CONFIDENT THAT *TODAY*...

...HERE AND NOW... THE CONSIDERABLE CARLINI *SHALL* ACHIEVE WHAT ONLY HOUDINI HAS MANAGED.

INDEED...I SHALL EASILY MATCH... WHAT THAT BASTARD ACCOMPLISHED...

TONIGHT SHALL BE...MY FINAL AND GREATEST...

Consid... Carlini

the GREA... MAGICIA...

LET US HOPE SO, OLD FRIEND.

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA.

AFTER MY RECENT *ALTERCATION* WITH THEM...*

...THE *SOCIETY OF UNITED MAGICIANS* HAS GONE INTO *HIDING.*

GET HIM! *GET HIM!*

100 LBS

AIN'T NO *GILLY* GONNA FLOUNCE IN HERE MAKING *DEMANDS* OF US *DECENT FOLK!*

THE *GAFFER* WANTS YOU OFF THE LOT...

*SEE THE SHADOW #0--JR.

OOOF!

WHUMP

...AND THAT MEANS YOU'RE GETTING *THROWN OFF* THE LOT!

WHERE'D HE *VANISH* TO--

UNNNGH!

CHWWP

HRRK!

YOU WANT A *CLEMP*

YOU *GOT* ONE!

SHRAP

AAOOOOW!

I MUST REMIND MYSELF TO *TEMPER* MY ACTIONS HERE.

THESE MEN AND WOMEN ARE SIMPLE *MUD CIRCUS* PERFORMERS.

THEY ARE *NOT* CRIMINALS... *NOT* THUGS ARMED WITH--

THWUMP

--GUNS.

WE GOT 'IM NOW!

HE'S RIGHT IN OUR SIGHTS!

fSSSS

WA-BOOM

CHEESE IT!

I AIN'T GETTIN' MY FACE BASHED FOR SOME TWO-BIT *PRESTIDIGITATOR!*

HAD YOU JUST ANSWERED MY QUESTIONS, WE COULD HAVE AVOIDED THIS *UNPLEASANTNESS.*

NOW... TELL ME... BEFORE I AM FORCED TO RESORT TO MORE *COMPELLING* TACTICS...

...WHERE CAN I FIND THE *GREAT FITZWIG?*

YER *TOO LATE.*

FITZWIG'S ALREADY *BUGGED OUT.*

WITH ANY LUCK--

"--HE'S *MILES* FROM HERE ALREADY."

KEEP YOUR FOOT ON THE GAS!

I DON'T KNOW *HOW* THE SHADOW FOUND ME ALL THE WAY OUT HERE.

BUT I HAVE NO INTEREST IN *MEETING* THE MAN *FACE-TO-FACE.*

WHAT KINDA *TROUBLE* DID YOU BRING WITH YOU, FITZWIG?

THE *SHADOW?*

I HEARD THAT GUY'S SOME BIG-CITY CRIME-KILLING *GHOST!*

A GHOST? NOT HARDLY.

HE'S A *FLESH AND BLOOD* MAN.

THERE'S NO WAY HE CAN KEEP UP WITH--

IT...

...IT *CAN'T* BE...

EVEN FOR ONE WITH *KEEN DEDUCTIVE PROWESS* SUCH AS MYSELF...

...MAGICIANS CAN BE *ELUSIVE* PREY.

THEY TRAIN... SOMETIMES FOR YEARS... TO MASTER THE ABILITY TO *DISAPPEAR* FROM SIGHT.

WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING!

BUT THE SOCIETY IS PLAGUED WITH THE SAME *MALADIES* THAT HOBBLE *ANY* CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION.

GREED... LAZINESS... PETTINESS...

...AND *COWARDICE.*

I NEEDED ONLY WAIT FOR ONE OF THEIR NUMBER TO *SCATTER*...

...LIKE A *RAT.*

CRUNNNCH

GO... NOW.

THE "*GREAT*" FITZWIG IS ONE OF THE *LOWLIEST* OF THE SOCIETY'S *VERMIN*...

...AND ONE OF THE FIRST TO RUN...

NNNNNN

...WHICH MAKES HIM *PERFECTLY SUITED* FOR MY PURPOSES.

HEY... I BARELY KNOW THIS GUY, ALL RIGHT?

I'M JUST DRIVIN' HIM-- CHAUFFER-LIKE!

STEFAN FITZWIG... DID YOU REALLY THINK YOU COULD *ESCAPE* ME?

DID YOU THINK YOU COULD LOSE YOURSELF AMONG THE CIRCUS FOLK?

THE *PUNISHMENT* AWAITING THE SOCIETY OF UNITED MAGICIANS...

...CANNOT BE *ESCAPED!*

HA HA HA HA HA

YOU... YOU'VE GOT ME ALL WRONG!

I'M NOT PART OF THE *INNER CIRCLE!*

I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY DID TO YOU!

I'M A *NOBODY!*

DO YOU THINK LIES WILL *SAVE* YOU FROM ME?

FWUMP

I MEAN IT!

I WASN'T RUNNING FROM YOU! I WAS RUNNING FROM THEM!

AFTER WHAT THEY ASKED ME TO DO...

SUICIDE, CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?

THEY WANTED YOU TO TAKE YOUR OWN LIFE?

YES... THAT RINGS *TRUE.*

HOUDINI

Expose with demonstrations

"YEARS AGO... I STUDIED UNDER ONE OF THE GREATEST OF YOUR ORDER...

"THE INCOMPARABLE *HARRY HOUDINI.*

"ONLY... WHEN HOUDINI WAS PART OF YOUR *CABAL*...

MANCHÚ

THE WONDER SHOW OF

"...IT WAS NOT THE *DEN OF INIQUITY* IT WOULD BECOME AFTER HIS DEATH.

"THE SOCIETY WOULD STOOP TO ANY LOW TO GATHER *ARCANE WISDOM*...

"...AND THEY *AGGRESSIVELY* PROTECTED THIS KNOWLEDGE!

"THIEVERY... EXTORTION... MURDER...

"THESE BECAME THE *TOOLS* OF THEIR *AVARICE.*

"BUT WHEN THEY *KIDNAPPED* THE *WIDOW* OF MY FRIEND HOUDINI...

"...THEY DREW MY *BALEFUL GAZE.*

"THEY BELIEVED HOUDINI'S SPIRIT PASSED A *SECRET* TO HIS WIFE...

"...A SECRET FROM *BEYOND THE GRAVE!*

"THEY WERE *RIGHT*...

"...ALTHOUGH BESS DARED NOT SHARE THIS SECRET WITH THEM.

"NOW *I* AM THE ONLY LIVING SOUL WHO POSSESSES THIS KNOWLEDGE.

"EVEN HOUDINI'S WIFE HAS BEEN COMPELLED TO *FORGET.*"

BUT THE SOCIETY WILL NOT REST EASY.

THEY WILL CONTINUE TO SEEK THE *FORBIDDEN APPLE.*

THERE IS NO TELLING WHO THEY MIGHT *HURT* IN THEIR QUEST.

AND EVEN THE SHADOW *SHUDDERS* TO THINK WHAT THEY MIGHT DO IF THEY WERE TO SOMEHOW *SUCCEED.*

S-SUCCEED?

HOUDINI REALLY *DID* HAVE A SECRET, DIDN'T HE?

HIS SPIRIT... *COMMUNICATED* WITH HIS WIFE.

EVEN THOUGH SHE SAID HE DIDN'T--HE *DID!*

AND YOU...

...OH, LORD...

...YOU--

"YOU *KNOW* WHAT HOUDINI LEARNED!"

SPIRITS FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE *HEED* MY CALL.

WE SEEK AN *AUDIENCE* WITH ONE RECENTLY PASSED INTO THE *GREAT BEYOND.*

COME BEFORE US!

CARLINI?

WHAT NEWS HAVE YOU TO TELL US?

WHAT HAVE YOU *LEARNED?*

THE *COLD...*

...THE *COLD EMBRACE* IS...

BLAM

SHOCK

IN THE COMPANY OF *CHARLATANS*, WHO CAN YOU TRUST?

WHAT IS THE *MEANING* OF THIS *INTRUSION?*

WHO ARE *YOU?*

WITH MIRRORS AND LIGHTS YOU *PREY* UPON THE NAÏVE AND WEAK.

THOSE SEEKING LOVED ONES.

TONIGHT THERE ARE NEITHER NAÏVE OR LOVED ONES PRESENT.

THE SHADOW KNOWS.

YOU *DARE* TO INTRUDE IN *MY* HOME LIKE THIS!

I DO *MORE* THAN DARE, *MADAME SETIENNE.*

I KNOW ABOUT YOU AND YOUR SCAMS, BUT THERE ARE LARGER STAKES AT PLAY TONIGHT THAN AN OLD FRAUD WHO THINKS MORE OF HERSELF THAN SHE IS WORTH.

IF YOU WISH TO *REMAIN* BENEATH MY CONCERNS, LEAVE THIS ROOM TO US.

NOW.

I HAVE QUESTIONS FOR MY *NEW FRIEND* HERE.

COME, GERARD.

WE NEED TO NOTIFY THE *AUTHORITIES.*

DO AS YOU WILL.

THEY WILL ONLY FIND *YOUR* INDISCRETIONS WAITING WHEN THEY ARRIVE.

DO YOU MIND IF WE HAVE A LITTLE CHAT?

I HAVE SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR LITTLE SOCIETY.

IT ISN'T LIKE I HAVE A CHOICE.

DO I?

YOU KNEW THE SÉANCE WAS A *FAKE.*

I SAW IT ON YOUR FACE WHEN THE *CHARADE* WAS REVEALED.

YOU ARE INTENTIONALLY *DECEIVING* THE OTHER MAGICIANS.

TO WHAT END? SIMPLY TO KEEP THEM *FOCUSED* ON A COMMON GOAL?

YES.

THAT IS TRUE.

A FEW WEEKS AGO, A WOMAN WAS KIDNAPPED.

THE WIFE OF HARRY HOUDINI.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW OF THAT?

HARRY WAS A FRIEND OF MINE. BESS AS WELL.

NO ONE HERE TONIGHT WAS INVOLVED IN *ANY WAY* WITH WHAT HAPPENED TO HER.

WHERE CAN I FIND THOSE WHO WERE INVOLVED?

THERE ARE SOME WITHIN THE SOCIETY THAT ARE MORE...

...*RADICAL* IN THEIR APPROACHES.

SOME ARE WILLING TO DO *ANYTHING* TO DISCOVER THE SECRETS OF *THE LAST ILLUSION.*

THEY HAVE TURNED THEIR SKILLS AWAY FROM ENTERTAINMENT TO MORE *DEADLY* MEASURES.

AND THEY ARE WILLING TO GO TO *ANY* LENGTHS TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS.

I HAVE *DEALT* WITH SEVERAL OF THEM.

MY METHODS WERE MORE *PERMANENT* THAN THE SLEIGHT OF HAND *TRICKS* THEY WERE USING.

BUT SOME OF THEM ESCAPED.

JUSTICE HAS WAITED *TOO LONG* TO BE DEALT TO THEM.

WHERE CAN I FIND THEM?

YOU ARE NOT A *WICKED* MAN.

THOUGH I CAN SEE THAT YOU WALK A *NARROW LINE.*

BEWARE, IF YOU CROSS THAT LINE THE SHADOW WILL BE WAITING FOR YOU.

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

WILSON,
NORTH CAROLINA.

WOOOT-WOOOT

MAMA, THE TRAIN!

THE TRAIN!

SLOW DOWN.

PAPA WILL BE HOME ANY MINUTE NOW.

EXCUSE ME, MISS.

TOILET

HGGK!

SLLLSSH

-GG-GURGLE-

THE GREAT FITZWIG.

HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE LAST WE TALKED, STEFAN?

WHAT'S THAT? YOU CAN'T SAY?

FINE, I SHALL DO *ALL* THE TALKING THEN.

I HOPE YOU DIDN'T FORGET *YOUR* PART OF THE PACT.

WE *WILL* LEARN THE SECRET OF THE *LAST ILLUSION.*

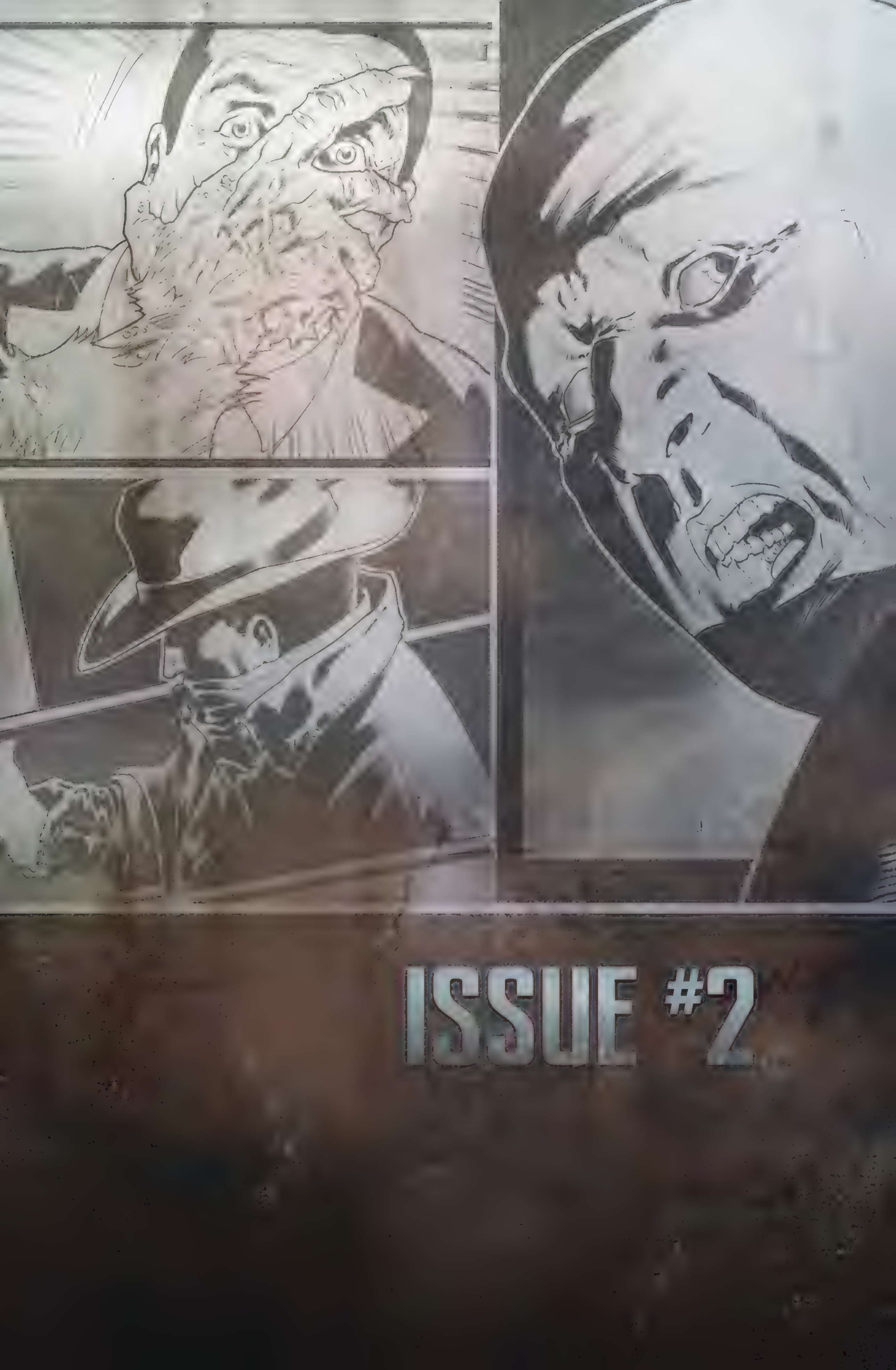
THE CONSIDERABLE CARLINI WAS *CONSIDERABLY* LESS THAN SUITED FOR THE TASK.

IT IS *TIME* YOU TOOK AN ACTIVE ROLE WITHIN THE SOCIETY OF UNITED MAGICIANS.

BRING US THE SECRET THAT OTHERS HAVE *FAILED* TO BRING.

I *PROMISE* YOU THAT FAILURE WILL BRING ABOUT TORMENTS TO YOUR *SOUL*...

...THE LIKES OF WHICH YOU *NEVER* IMAGINED.



ISSUE #2



ART BY BUTCH GUICE | COLORS BY ALEX GUIMARÃES

MACHPELAH CEMETERY.

IT HAS BEEN TEN YEARS SINCE I LOST YOU, OLD FRIEND.

BUT NEVER HAS THE PAIN OF THAT LOSS BEEN MORE PROFOUND THAN IT IS NOW.

WHEN YOU BUILT THIS MONUMENT YOU KNEW IT WOULD STAND THE TEST OF TIME.

I AM SURE YOU ASSUMED THE *SOCIETY OF UNITED MAGICIANS*--A GROUP YOU HELPED TO FOUND--WOULD LAST AS WELL.

ERECTED BY
HOUDINI
1916
IN SACRED MEMORY
OF HIS
BELOVED PARE

BUT THIS BUSINESS WITH THE *LAST ILLUSION*...

...WHAT THEY SEEK...

...AND WHAT THEY ARE WILLING TO DO...

...HAS PROVEN THAT THE MEN WHO WERE ONCE YOUR COLLEAGUES...

...ARE NOW *MONSTERS.*

THEY WOULD TEAR DOWN ALL OF *CIVILIZATION* IF IT SUITED THEIR DESIRES.

HOUDINI

WEISS

AND SO *JUSTICE* MUST BE SERVED.

BUT WHERE WAS JUSTICE WHEN YOU WERE TAKEN?

THERE WAS NONE TO BE HAD.

I TRACKED THE MAN WHO STRUCK THE *KILLING BLOW.*

BUT THERE WAS NO *CRIME* THERE.

THERE WAS A *PAIN* WITHIN THAT MAN THAT TOLD ME ALL I NEEDED TO KNOW.

HE MEANT YOU NO *MALICE* AND HAS LIVED WITH HIS *GUILT* ALL THESE YEARS.

HE HAS LIVED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT HE TOOK A *GREAT MAN* FROM THE WORLD.

BESS IS SAFE.

YOU'LL HAVE TO WAIT FOR HER A LITTLE LONGER.

AS LONG AS THIS NEW SOCIETY EXISTS, I WILL ALWAYS HAVE EYES ON HER.

I HAVE MANY *AGENTS,* AND THEY KEEP THE *VIGIL* WHEN I CANNOT.

THE SOCIETY HAS *SCATTERED.* THEY *HIDE* LIKE THE *VERMIN* THEY ARE.

BUT THE DARKNESS WILL NOT PROTECT THEM FROM *ME.*

THEY SHALL TAINT YOUR *LEGACY* NO LONGER.

THEIR DAYS ARE *NUMBERED.*

THE CHARLATAN *MADAME SETIENNE* MUST BE DEALT WITH.

HAD THE SHADOW NOT SHOWN UP TO ROUST US ALL...

...THERE'S NO TELLING *HOW LONG* SHE WOULD HAVE STRUNG US ALONG WITH THAT *FAKE SÉANCE.*

SHE WILL BE DEALT WITH, *MIS HERMANOS.*

I FEEL *PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE* AS IT WAS I WHO CONTRACTED HER SERVICES.

THE NAME MADAME SETIENNE SHALL NEVER AGAIN BE UTTERED AFTER THIS WEEKEND.

NO ONE BLAMES *YOU,* MIGUEL.

THE SEARCH FOR THE LAST ILLUSION IS *ALL-CONSUMING.*

WE SHALL WALK *MANY PATHS* IN OUR QUEST...

...EVEN THOUGH MANY OF THOSE SHALL LEAD TO *DEAD-ENDS.*

LET US HOPE NOT.

ETHAN SANDS!

WE ARE DELIGHTED THAT YOU WERE ABLE TO ACCEPT OUR INVITATION.

YOU SHALL CALL ME THE *SANDMAN.*

ETHAN SANDS IS THE NAME ONLY MY *FAMILY* USES.

AND WHILE WE MAY BE *BRETHREN* WITHIN THE SOCIETY, THAT DOES NOT MAKE US FAMILY.

TO THE BUSINESS AT HAND.

THIS *SHADOW* IS NOTHING MORE THAN A *NUISANCE* THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN DEALT WITH LONG AGO.

LIKE PETER PAN'S SHADOW, HE WILL BE SNAPPED OFF AND HUNG OUT THE WINDOW.

PAH!

HE SPEAKS OF *CHILDREN'S BOOKS* AND *FAIRY TALES.*

H-HOW?

HOW IS IT THAT YOU PLAN TO TAKE CARE OF THE SHADOW WHEN *SO MANY* BEFORE YOU HAVE *FAILED?*

DO NOT MUDDY *MY* REPUTATION WITH THE *INCOMPETENCE* OF *OTHERS.*

THESE CRATES ARE TO BE TENDED TO WITH THE *UTMOST CARE.*

AM I *UNDERSTOOD?*

I AM PLACING MY TRUST IN *YOU,* FRITZ.

THESE *OTHERS--*

--WELL...

THEY'LL LEARN FOR THEMSELVES, YES?

HRAH HRAH

MADRE DE DIOS!

EL DIABLO!

YEEAAAGHH!

SNAP

CRACK SNAP

CRACK NEEEEAAAGGGGHHH! SNAP CRACK SHHRRRRRK

TWEEEEEEEEEE

NOW.

LET'S DISCUSS HOW WE ARE GOING TO *KILL* THIS *SHADOW* OF YOURS.

NEW YORK CITY.
THE COBALT CLUB.

COBALT CLUB

EDWARD!

A *PLEASURE* TO SEE YOU.

THANK YOU FOR MEETING ME HERE.

I TOOK THE *LIBERTY* OF MOVING FIRST.

ALEISTER, LAMONT.

MY FATHER WAS EDWARD.

HE WAS A GREAT MAN, A HERO TO ME AND A FRIEND ALWAYS.

I STRIVE TO LIVE UP TO THE NAME.

BUT UNTIL SUCH A TIME THAT I DO, I SHALL BE CALLED *ALEISTER*.

TO WHAT DO I OWE THE *PLEASURE* OF THIS MEETING?

YOU SPENT A GREAT DEAL OF MONEY TO BRING ME HERE FOR A GAME OF CHESS.

YOUR DRINK, SIR.

PUT THEM ON MY TAB, CHARLES.

IN THAT CASE, KEEP THEM COMING, MY GOOD MAN!

EVER *WILLING*, EH, ALEISTER?

I HAVE NEVER BEEN ONE TO DENY THE *PLEASURES* IN LIFE.

ON TO BUSINESS.

IT SEEMS WE SHARE A COMMON INTEREST IN ART.

I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU ARE ENGAGING THE SERVICES OF THE TALENTED FRIEDA HARRIS.

INTERESTING.

CARE TO LET ME KNOW YOUR SOURCES?

COME NOW, ALEISTER.

A GENTLEMAN NEVER TELLS SUCH THINGS.

I AM *LISTENING.*

I WANT TO *INVEST* IN YOUR PROJECT.

WHILE I AM NOT PART OF YOUR *ORDO TEMPLI ORIENTIS*...

AND DO NOT WISH TO BE PUBLICLY *ASSOCIATED* WITH IT...

...I AM INTERESTED IN SUPPLYING FUNDING FROM *BEHIND THE SCENES.*

AND WHAT DO YOU GET FROM THIS?

SURELY, YOU EXPECT *SOMETHING* IN RETURN.

I HAVE A GREAT MANY *INTERESTS.*

THE OCCULT.

EGYPTIAN HISTORY AND THE MYTHOLOGY OF THEIR DEITIES.

YOU EXPOSE YOUR QUEEN?

A GOOD THING YOU HAVE INTERESTS OTHER THAN CHESS!

EVEN THE ART OF *MISDIRECTION.*

CHECK.

MAGICK.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW OF *MAGICK?*

OF LATE, I HAVE HEARD TALK OF SOMETHING CALLED *THE LAST ILLUSION.*

IF YOU WISH TO INVEST, I WILL HAPPILY TAKE YOUR MONEY...

BUT ANY INTEREST IN THE LAST ILLUSION IS BEYOND YOUR *PLACE* IN THIS WORLD.

CHECK AND MATE.

A WISE MAN WOULD FORGET HE HAD EVER HEARD OF IT.

GOOD DAY, MR. CRANSTON.

HEDGEMONT HOTEL.

"THE GREAT BEAST."

WHEN DID YOU GET *SO OLD?*

GRRRREEAK

AN OLD BUILDING.

FULL OF CREAKS AND--

SHHHH-NAK-NAK-NAK

IS...

...IS SOMEONE *HERE?*

I WOULD HAVE *WORDS* WITH YOU, CROWLEY.

YOU KNOW OF THE SOCIETY OF UNITED MAGICIANS.

YOU KNOW OF THEIR *MURDEROUS SCHEMES.*

AND YOU WILL REVEAL ALL TO--*THE SHADOW!*

DO NOT THINK YOU CAN *LIE* TO ME, CROWLEY?

THE SHADOW KNOWS WHAT EVIL LURKS IN THE HEART OF MEN.

I...I DON'T KNOW *ANYTHING!*

I CAN'T *HELP* YOU!

THEY'LL *KILL* ME.

I HAVE TURNED AWAY FROM THEIR ORDER.

BUT THE OATHS I SWORE HOLD TRUE.

IF I REVEAL THEIR SECRETS--

MY WRATH SHOULD FRIGHTEN YOU *MORE* THAN A BROKEN PROMISE.

WHAT IS THE LAST ILLUSION?

WHY ARE THESE CHARLATANS WILLING TO KILL TO ACQUIRE IT?

A-ALL RIGHT.

I'LL TELL YOU.

I'LL TELL YOU...BUT THEN--*PLEASE*--JUST LEAVE ME ALONE!

"*THE LAST ILLUSION* WAS THE WORK OF *ONE* MAN...

"...*VARDELL GOSCELIN*... A 14th CENTURY SCHOLAR, SCIENTIST, AND MAGICIAN.

"HIS EARLIEST DAYS ARE A *MYSTERY*...

"...BUT THERE ARE THOSE WHO BELIEVE HE WAS RELATED BY BLOOD TO THE *DEVIL* HIMSELF.

"THAT DISTINCTION HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN AFFORDED ONLY TO PERHAPS THE *GREATEST* OF MAGES--*MERLIN.*

"AND IF GOSCELIN WAS THE *DEVIL'S* KIN, HE STILL SHOWED SIGNS OF *GOD'S* MERCY.

"HIS REPUTATION GREW DURING A TIME OF GREAT DESPERATION.

"A *PLAGUE* GRIPPED THE LAND AND SHOWED NO SIGNS OF SLOWING.

"GOSCELIN SAW THIS DISEASE... THIS *FILTH*... AS HIS ENEMY.

"HE STUDIED IT... TRYING TO FIND A WEAKNESS HE COULD EXPLOIT SO HE COULD KILL IT.

"WHEN SCIENCE... WHEN FAITH... FAILED HIM...

"...HE TURNED TO *OLDER* POWERS.

"THESE ANCIENT FORCES *BLESSED* HIM...

"...AND HE FOUND A MEANS TO COMBAT HIS ENEMY.

"HE TURNED THE DEMONS OF THE *SPIRITUAL WORLD* AGAINST THE DEMONS OF THE *MUNDANE WORLD.*

"HE USED THE VERY *IMPS OF PERDITION* TO *LEECH* THE TAINTED BLOOD FROM HIS PATIENTS.

"THE POWER TO HEAL, THOUGH, APPERSED HIM FOR ONLY SO LONG.

"HIS *APPETITE* FOR FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE *GREW*... UNTIL HE WAS *STARVING!*

"HE SOUGHT *DEEPER RESERVOIRS* OF MAGIC...

"...AND HIS POWERS *SWELLED.*

"AND EVEN HIS DEEDS WERE SEEN AS *HEROIC*...

...EVEN WHEN IT SEEMED HE WAS USING HIS GIFTS FOR *GOOD*...

"...HIS EVERY ACTION WAS INTENDED TO *STRENGTHEN* HIS *ESOTERIC WISDOM.*

"I DOUBT HE EVEN *REALIZED* WHEN HE SOMETIMES HELPED OTHERS.

"OTHERS SAW HIS BURGEONING TALENTS...

"...AND THEY *DEMANDED* THAT HE SHARE HIS SECRETS OR BE *THRICE-DAMNED.*

"BUT GOSCELIN HAD GROWN *GREEDY* AND *COVETOUS*...

"...AND HE WOULD *NOT* BE *BULLIED.*

"HE MADE *SHORT WORK* OF ANYONE WHO STOOD AGAINST HIM.

"BUT EVEN THE DEATH OF HIS ENEMIES WAS NOT ASSURANCE ENOUGH.

"HE CRAFTED A SPELL IN HIS FINAL DAYS... A SPELL TO--*LITERALLY*-- END ALL SPELLS.

"IT *HID* THE NATURE OF MAGIC... *BURIED* IT DEEP SO THAT NO MAN COULD WORK TRUE MIRACLES EVER AGAIN."

THIS IS THE KNOWLEDGE THE SOCIETY OF UNITED MAGICIANS DESIRES.

THEY ARE TRYING TO *TRANSCEND DEATH.*

THEY BELIEVE THAT IF THEY CAN FIND GOSCELIN IN THE SPIRIT WORLD...

...THEY CAN *COMPEL* HIM TO SHARE HIS SECRETS.

SO... THAT'S WHY THEY ACCOSTED HOUDINI'S WIDOW.

THEY'VE MADE *OTHER* OFFERS TO THOSE WHO ARE REACHING THEIR LIFE'S *END.*

THEY'VE ASKED THE AGING TO BE THEIR *AMBASSADORS* IN THE *HEREAFTER.*

THEY BELIEVED HOUDINI UNCOVERED THE *TRUTH* OF THE LAST ILLUSION...

...THAT HIS SPIRIT *DID* VISIT HIS GRIEVING WIFE...

...AND THEY HOPED TO FORCE HER TO DIVULGE WHAT HE HAD TOLD HER.

YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE THE *PROMISES* THEY'VE MADE...

...THE *VILE CARROTS* THEY'VE DANGLED.

AND WHEN THE ELDERLY FAIL THEM, THEY'LL TURN TO *SUICIDE.*

AND WHEN THAT DOESN'T WORK...

MURDER.

HOUDINI FOUND *SOMETHING* BEYOND THIS REALM.

HE PASSED ON A *MESSAGE* FEW HAVE HEARD.

WHAT HE FOUND IS BEYOND THE *UNDERSTANDING* OF *MORTAL* MEN...

...BUT THE *SHADOW* KNOWS.

YOU MUST UNDERSTAND.

ALL THEIR LIVES, THEY'VE CHASED *MIRACLES.*

THEY'RE *DESPERATE* NOW.

DESPERATE TO PROVE THAT THE *WONDERS* THEY BELIEVE IN ARE MORE THAN LIES.

WHERE CAN I *FIND* THESE MAGICIANS?

IF YOU'VE MADE *ENEMIES* OF THEM...

...THEY'LL SET *TRAPS* FOR YOU.

BUT TAKE THIS ADDRESS AND BE GONE FROM MY SIGHT!

YOUR TIME IN AMERICA IS DONE, CROWLEY.

GO... BEFORE THE SOCIETY REALIZES YOU WERE HERE.

AND TAKE THIS *KNOWLEDGE* WITH YOU.

1408 HILL AVENUE.

IT SEEMS *DOUBTFUL* I'LL FIND WHAT I SEEK HERE.

PERHAPS CROWLEY WAS *MISLEADING* ME.

SENDING ME ON A WILD GOOSE CHASE TO *HOBBLE* MY EFFORTS.

ALTHOUGH...

...THESE LOOK *PROMISING.*

BLOOD.

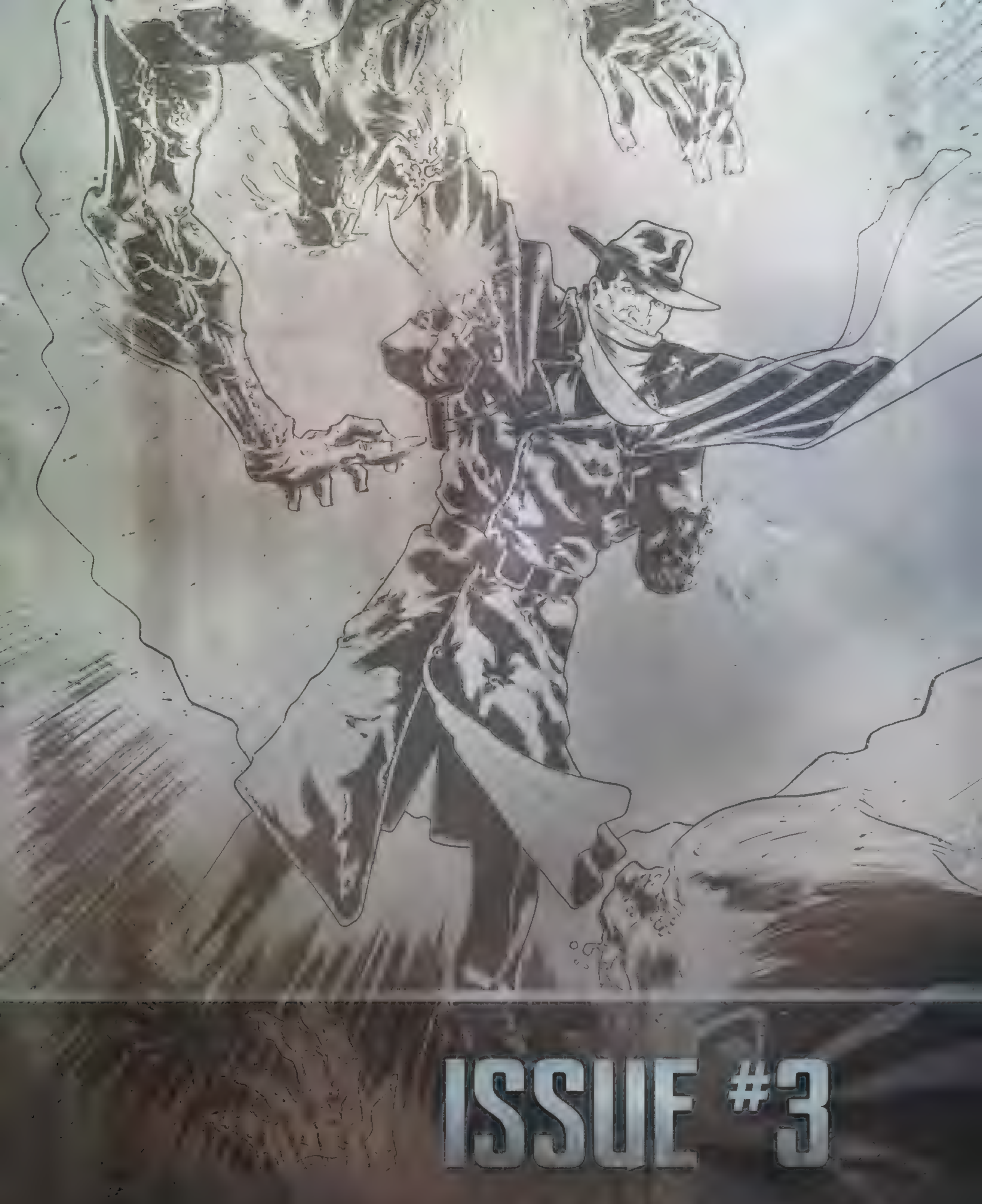
THE *SMELL...*

...NOT DISSIMILAR TO...

...WET *MONKEY?*

RRR RR


HRAH
HRAH
HRAH



ISSUE #3



ART BY BUTCH GUICE | COLORS BY ALEX GUIMARÃES

IT IS *RARE* FOR ME TO BEGIN AN INVESTIGATION WITHOUT HAVING A *REASONABLE* IDEA OF WHAT LIES AHEAD OF ME.

"BE PREPARED".

THE SLOGAN FOR THE FLEDGLING ORGANIZATION OF *BOY SCOUTS.*

IT COULD JUST AS EASILY HAVE BEEN THE *MOTTO* FOR THE *ILLUSIONISTS* OF THE WORLD.

TO BE A GREAT MAGICIAN OR AN ESCAPIST REQUIRES *PRACTICE* AND *PREPARATION.*

TAKE HARRY, FOR INSTANCE.

THE GREAT HOUDINI.

DURING HIS PERFORMANCES... RIGHT BEFORE HE ENTERED SOME *DEATHTRAP...*

...HE WOULD STEEL HIS RESOLVE WITH A *KISS* FROM HIS WIFE.

OF COURSE, THIS IS WHEN BESS WOULD PASS A *LOCK PICK* FROM HER MOUTH TO HIS.

NEEDLESS TO SAY, I WAS NOT FULLY PREPARED FOR WHAT I FOUND HERE TONIGHT.

NEVER BEFORE HAVE I TRIED TO CLOUD THE MINDS OF AN ANIMAL.

THE RESULTS ARE...*NOT PERFECT.*

SHOULD I SURVIVE THIS EVENING'S RATHER *UNEXPECTED* ADVENTURES...

...I SHALL HAVE TO MAKE AN EFFORT TO IMPROVE THIS ASPECT OF MY POWERS.

ALTHOUGH TONIGHT'S SUBJECTS SEEM TO HAVE RATHER *DIFFERENT* PLANS...

...THAT *DON'T* INCLUDE MY *SURVIVAL.*

HRAH HRAH HRAH

I LOATHE HAVING TO USE SUCH *LETHAL MEASURES* AGAINST ANIMALS...

BLAM BLAM

BLAM BLAM

...BUT THEY ARE LEAVING ME WITH NO ALTERNATIVES.

SHNNK

THE QUESTION NOW IS WHETHER CROWLEY SET ME UP.

WAS HE HOPING THAT THESE CREATURES WOULD KILL ME...

...OR WERE THEY REPRESENTING "OTHER" PARTIES?

THE LIVES THESE BEASTS LED...

...THE PAIN AND TORTURE THEY ENDURED...

WHAT SORT OF *MONSTER* COULD DO SUCH THINGS TO A LIVING CREATURE?

LET'S SEE WHAT FURTHER SURPRISES AWAIT ME.

AH, THE MYSTERIOUS SHADOW.

FINALLY COME TO JOIN ME, I SEE.

I'M AFRAID YOU'VE ARRIVED TOO LATE TO QUESTION ANY OF MY *ESTEEMED* COLLEAGUES.

A SHAME ABOUT BUSTER AND CHARLIE.

BUT THEY ARE EASILY *REPLACED.*

WHO ARE YOU?

OH?

ARE *NAMES* IMPORTANT TO YOU NOW?

AND IF I ASKED FOR YOUR NAME-- YOUR *TRUE* NAME-- WOULD YOU GIVE IT WILLINGLY?

I *DOUBT* YOU WOULD.

AND SO, I'LL CALL YOU *THE SHADOW.*

AND YOU CAN CALL ME *THE SANDMAN.*

THIS DECK IS SAID TO HAVE BELONGED TO *RICARDO LAZZAR.*

HE WAS THE FIRST TO *PERFECT* THE ART OF THROWING CARDS WITH *DEADLY ACCURACY.*

THP

THHP

THHP

NOT THAT HIS NAME IS KNOWN OUTSIDE THE HALLS OF MAGIC.

HE CHOSE TO WALK A PATH THAT, WERE HE ALIVE TODAY, WOULD HAVE SURELY *CROSSED* YOUR OWN.

NO REAL *CHICANERY* HERE.

JUST *PRACTICE.*

THIS, HOWEVER, IS SOMETHING ELSE.

IT WAS BELIEVED THAT THIS WOULD OPEN A PORTAL DIRECTLY TO *HELL,* THROUGH WHICH DEMONS WOULD COME TO OUR WORLD.

NOT *EXACTLY* A MAGIC *TRICK.*

ACTUALLY, IT IS JUST A FANCY *MUSIC BOX.*

BUT WITH THE PROPER PRESENTATION, AN AUDIENCE WILL BELIEVE *ANYTHING.*

YOUR *TRINKETS* DO NOT IMPRESS *ME.*

AND IF THESE MEN WERE YOUR "*COLLEAGUES*"...

...WHY HAVE YOU *MURDERED* THEM?

OH... I DIDN'T DO *THIS.* IN FACT, WHEN I FOUND THE BODIES, I ASSUMED IT WAS *YOUR* WORK.

I METE OUT *JUSTICE* WHERE IT NEEDS TO BE SERVED.

WHEN CRIME TAKES ROOT IN CIVILIZED SOCIETY, I STEP IN AND *CLEAR* THE *WEEDS.*

TOUCHED A BIT OF A *RAW NERVE,* I SEE.

IT WAS AN *HONEST MISTAKE.*

IF YOU HOLD THESE MEN IN SUCH *LOW ESTEEM*...

...WHY WOULD YOU *DEBASE* YOURSELF TO WORK WITH THEM?

MY WORK?

THESE MEN HAVE BEEN *BUTCHERED.*

COME NOW.

EVEN YOU MUST HAVE *NEEDS* TO BE MET.

DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH THEY OFFERED ME TO *KILL* YOU?

A CRAVEN'S *BLOOD MONEY* IS NOT MY CONCERN.

$250,000.

PAID IN *CASH.*

THANKS TO MY NEGOTIATION STRATEGIES, MY SISTER AND HER SON NOW HAVE A HOME IN ARGENTINA.

BUT YOU DON'T CARE TO HEAR TALES OF MY FAMILY NOR OUR FINANCIAL STANDING.

YOUR CONCERN FOR YOUR FAMILY IS *UPLIFTING...*

...BUT YOU TRADE IN *DEATH* AND *MURDER...*

...AND THOSE SCALES MUST BE *BALANCED.*

BALANCE?

DO YOU THINK YOUR ACTIONS CREATE BALANCE?

YOU MURDER... BUT WITH THE BELIEF THAT YOU SERVE JUSTICE.

EVERY DEATH YOU SERVE UP CREATES A *VACUUM.*

NATURE ABHORS A VACUUM. AS DOES SOCIETY.

MORE WILL ASCEND AND FIGHT TO FILL THE HOLES YOUR BULLETS LEAVE BEHIND.

THESE MEN WERE NOT KILLED BECAUSE OF YOUR *SENSE OF JUSTICE...*

...NOR DID THEY DIE BECAUSE OF MY *BUSINESS PRACTICES...*

...AND YET THEIR CORPSES SUGGEST THAT OUR GOALS MAY HAVE MORE IN COMMON THAN EITHER OF US THOUGHT.

WE BOTH NEED TO DISCOVER WHO KILLED THESE MEN.

I SHALL ENJOY USING YOU AND YOUR METHODS TO HELP ME ACHIEVE MY ENDGAME.

YOU SEEK TO *USE* ME?

NO ONE PERVERTS JUSTICE IN MY NAME!

BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM

JUST LIKE THE ONES WHO HIRED HIM...

...THIS *"SANDMAN"* USES SUBTERFUGE AND TRICKERY.

A TRAP DOOR... SEALED TIGHT FROM THE OTHER SIDE.

I COULD SHATTER IT, BUT--

=HURRRK=

NITOCRIS...

NITOCRIS?

WHAT IS THAT? I HAVE NEVER HEARD OF IT BEFORE.

A *DRUG* OF SOME SORT? OR A *CHEMICAL?*

NOT... A WHAT.

WHO...

...HARRY...

...HE KNEW...

NITOCRIS.

A NAME THAT WARRANTS FURTHER INVESTIGATION.

I WONDER IF THE SANDMAN HEARD ANY OF THAT.

NO DOUBT I HAVE NOT SEEN THE LAST OF HIM.

UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK.

AND HE CAN BE CERTAIN THAT HE HAS NOT SEEN THE LAST OF ME.

MR. CRANSTON--IT IS AN *HONOR* TO MEET YOU.

I WAS TOLD THAT YOU WANTED TO CONTRIBUTE A SIZABLE DONATION TO THE ARCHEOLOGY DEPARTMENT.

IT ISN'T OFTEN MONEY COMES IN THE DOOR LOOKING FOR ME.

USUALLY I HAVE TO *BEG AND PLEAD* FOR FUNDING.

I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A PATRON OF THE ARTS AND EDUCATION, PROFESSOR TIBBERT.

I BELIEVE THAT THOSE WITH THE MEANS SHOULD ALWAYS CONTRIBUTE TO THOSE WITHOUT IT.

IT IS WHAT MAKES US A *CIVILIZED* SOCIETY.

A PLEASURE TO HEAR IT.

SO HOW CAN I HELP YOU TODAY? OTHER THAN BY ACCEPTING YOUR MONEY, OF COURSE.

IN MY EXPERIENCE, SUCH GESTURES ALWAYS COME WITH A *REQUEST.*

YOU *WOUND* ME, PROFESSOR.

I WOULD LIKE TO THINK THAT AS MEN OF EDUCATION, WE COULD PERIODICALLY DISCUSS SUCH THINGS.

IN NO WAY IS IT A REQUIREMENT OF MY PLEDGE.

I DON'T HAVE ANOTHER CLASS FOR AN HOUR.

IS THERE SOME *PARTICULAR TOPIC* YOU WISH TO DISCUSS THIS AFTERNOON?

IS THAT *DRAMBUIE* BY CHANCE? I AM A BIT *PARCHED.*

IT IS INDEED.

I DO HAVE AN INTEREST IN *EGYPTIAN LORE.*

THERE IS A FIGURE I HAVE HEARD BY NAME, BUT DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT.

PERHAPS YOU KNOW SOMETHING OF *NITOCRIS?*

NITOCRIS, YOU SAY?

I KNOW SHE WAS AN *EGYPTIAN QUEEN.*

BEYOND THAT I COULDN'T GIVE YOU ANY DETAILS ABOUT HER LIFE OR WHO SHE WAS.

THAT IS RATHER *DISAPPOINTING.*

THERE IS A WOMAN WHO MIGHT BE OF INTEREST TO YOU IN YOUR RESEARCH.

SHE IS NOT AN ACADEMIC THOUGH.

SHE USED TO BE A WELL RESPECTED *MEDIUM.*

GAYLE ARGYLE. SHE LIVES IN LONDON.

SHE FAMOUSLY CLAIMED TO BE THE *REINCARNATION* OF *NITOCRIS.*

PROFESSOR TIBBERT, I HOPE WE CAN HAVE A *LONG* AND *FRUITFUL* ASSOCIATION.

FOR NOW, THOUGH, IT APPEARS I HAVE SOME *TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS* TO MAKE.

LONDON, ENGLAND.

76 TROTTER'S LANE.

WHEEEEEET

YOU MIGHT AS WELL COME OUT NOW.

THIS *TEA* ISN'T GOING TO STAY *WARM* ALL NIGHT.

GAYLE ARGYLE...

...I COME HERE SEEKING JUSTICE--

JUSTICE FOR HOUDINI?

YES, YES. I KNOW ALL ABOUT IT.

AND ABOUT *YOU.*

GAYLE KNOWS WHAT *SECRETS* LIE IN THE HEARTS OF MEN, DEARIE.

I WOULD OFFER TO TAKE YOUR SCARF, HAT, AND COAT...

...BUT SOMEHOW I DOUBT YOU WOULD BE *AGREEABLE* TO THAT, WOULD YOU?

SO WHAT BRINGS YOU TO MY SITTING ROOM?

I COULD BE *PRESUMPTUOUS* AND TELL YOU, BUT I SENSE YOU PREFER DOING THINGS YOUR WAY.

IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE RUMORS OF YOUR *PSYCHIC ABILITIES* ARE TRUE.

HEAVENS, NO.

I AM SIMPLY A VERY *OBSERVANT* PERSON...NOT SO DIFFERENT FROM *YOU.*

I DON'T GO AROUND LEAPING FROM MOVING CARS, SHOOTING AT RUFFIANS AND HOOLIGANS WHILE DODGING BULLETS.

BUT WE BOTH KNOW THAT IS ONLY PART OF WHAT YOU DO.

I'M CURIOUS TO TEST YOUR POWERS OF OBSERVATION.

WHY DO *YOU* THINK I'M HERE?

HARRY'S DEATH WAS A *TRAGEDY,* WASN'T IT? ONE THAT, I'M AFRAID, CONTINUES TO PLAY OUT TO THIS DAY.

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN PLEASANT TO THINK THIS *FOUL* BUSINESS ENDED WITH THE KIDNAPPING OF HIS DEAR WIFE, BESS.

BUT WE BOTH KNOW THAT'S NOT TRUE.

YOU KNOW ABOUT HOUDINI'S WIDOW?

I KNOW THE *SOCIETY OF UNITED MAGICIANS* BELIEVED SHE UNDERSTOOD HARRY'S SECRETS...

...SECRETS HE PASSED ON *AFTER DEATH...*

...AND THEY WERE WILLING TO DO ALL MANNER OF *TERRIBLE* THINGS TO GET HER TO TALK.

PERHAPS SHE *DID* KNOW SOMETHING.

MAYBE HARRY *VISITED* HER AFTER HIS *DEMISE.*

BUT I SUSPECT THAT KNOWLEDGE HAS BEEN *BLOCKED* FROM HER MIND...

...PERHAPS BY SOMEONE POSSESSING THE POWERS OF *HYPNOSIS.*

I ADMIT, I HAVE... *ASSOCIATES...* WHO ARE KEEPING AN EYE ON BESS.

WHEN SHE SAYS SHE WAS NOT CONTACTED BY HER HUSBAND'S SPIRIT...

...SHE GENUINELY *BELIEVES* IT.

IF YOU *DID* CLOUD HER *MEMORIES...*

...YOU *SAVED* HER LIFE.

AS YOU KNOW, THERE ARE THOSE WHO WOULD KILL TO LEARN HER SECRETS.

BUT THERE ARE ALSO THOSE WHO WOULD KILL TO MAKE SURE THE LAST ILLUSION *REMAINS* A *MYSTERY.*

YOU ARE SPEAKING ABOUT YOURSELF.

MYSELF... YES.

AND MY ASSOCIATES.

THERE IS MORE THAN *ONE* ORDER OF MAGICIANS...

...AND OUR AGENDAS ARE *REMARKABLY DIFFERENT.*

A FEW YEARS AGO, THIS ROOM WOULD HAVE LOOKED QUITE DIFFERENT.

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN CLUTTERED WITH EGYPTIAN ARTIFACTS...

...MOST OF THEM QUITE *FAKE.*

"IN THOSE DAYS, I CLAIMED TO BE THE REINCARNATED NITOCRIS...

"...QUEEN OF EGYPT...

"...QUEEN OF ESOTERIC MYSTERY."

I IMAGINE IT IS THAT NAME THAT BROUGHT YOU HERE, YES?

MANY OF MY COLLEAGUES...AND *ALL* OF MY ENEMIES... STILL CALL ME BY THAT NAME.

IN THOSE DAYS, HARRY AND I WERE *RIVALS.*

HIS *WORRISOME HABIT* OF DEBUNKING SPIRITUALISTS CAUSED ME A BIT OF *EMBARRASSMENT.*

BUT WE *RESPECTED* EACH OTHER.

I LIKE TO THINK IT WAS THAT RESPECT TO HARRY'S USE OF *NITOCRIS* IN HIS STORY.

"ENTOMBED WITH THE PHARAOHS."

IT WAS GHOSTWRITTEN, OF COURSE, BY A FELLOW BY THE NAME OF *LOVECRAFT.*

BUT HARRY'S INFLUENCE...AND *MINE*...IS CLEAR.

I AM HERE TO UNCOVER WHY SOMEONE...

...YOURSELF OR YOUR ALLIES...

...WOULD TARGET OTHER MAGICIANS AND SPIRITUALISTS FOR DEATH.

I HAVE NO INTEREST IN A LITERATURE LESSON.

NO?

BUT WITHIN MY LESSON IS THE *TRUE* REASON THE SOCIETY MUST BE *STOPPED.*

ENOUGH!

I WILL DEAL WITH THE SOCIETY OF UNITED MAGICIANS.

AND I WILL NOT *TOLERATE* YOUR INTERFERENCE.

YOU WILL CALL OFF YOUR *HOUNDS.*

SUCH DEMANDS ARE, I ASSURE YOU, *POINTLESS.*

THE "*HOUNDS*" AS YOU CALL THEM HAVE ALREADY BEEN *UNLEASHED.*

IT'S FAR, FAR *TOO LATE* TO CALL THEM OFF.

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

OUR ENEMIES RISK DESTROYING *EVERYTHING.*

SURELY THAT WARRANTS DECISIVE...

...EVEN *RUTHLESS...*

...ACTION...

CLATTER CLACK CLATTER

N-NO...

-KAKK!-

MADAME ARGYLE? ARE YOU--

-HRRGGH!-

-KAKK!-

-HRRK!-

CHECKING HER PULSE IS A *PERFUNCTORY* ACT.

GAYLE ARGYLE... THE SELF-PROCLAIMED QUEEN NITOCRIS... IS *DEAD.*

SHE WAS DEAD FROM HER FIRST SIP OF HER EVENING TEA.

LUCKY FOR ME... I DID NOT INDULGE.

THE LAST ILLUSION... A FAIRY TALE TOLD WITHIN MAGICAL CIRCLES...

...HAS SPARKED A *WAR*...

...AND I FIND MYSELF CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE.

BUT MY JUSTICE WILL BE *SWIFT*... AND *BLIND*, TO THE BELIEFS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE CONFLICT...

...AND LET NO ONE--BE THEY MORTAL, SPIRIT, OR GOD--ATTEMPT TO *DISSUADE* ME FROM MY CAUSE.

ISSUE #4

ART BY BUTCH GUICE | COLORS BY ALEX GUIMARÃES

WHILE IT WAS PUBLISHED UNDER HARRY HOUDINI'S BYLINE...

...*"ENTOMBED WITH THE PHARAOHS"* WAS *GHOSTWRITTEN* BY *HOWARD PHILLIPS LOVECRAFT.*

LOVECRAFT WAS AN AUTHOR OF *GHASTLY* FICTION...

...MOST FREQUENTLY PUBLISHED IN THE PAGES OF *WEIRD TALES* MAGAZINE.

ANCIENT EGYPT

Secrets from the sands of Saqqara

HIS WORK WAS SO *HIDEOUS* AND *BIZARRE*...

...PRESENTED IN SUCH A MATTER-OF-FACT NARRATIVE...

...THAT SOME OF HIS READERS BELIEVED HE WAS PENNING *ACTUAL ACCOUNTS* RATHER THAN FICTION.

HIS STORIES, THOUGH, WERE DRAWN FROM HIS OWN *LABYRINTHINE MIND*...

...QUITE LITERALLY THE STUFF OF *NIGHTMARE.*

GAYLE ARGYLE... THE MYSTIC KNOWN IN SOME CIRCLES AS *QUEEN NITOCRIS*...

...WAS *MURDERED* RIGHT BEFORE MY EYES.

BEFORE I LEFT HER HOME, I PROCURED A NUMBER OF DOCUMENTS...

...INCLUDING *ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT PAGES* FOR THE STORY LOVECRAFT WROTE FOR HARRY.

THE STORY, IT WOULD SEEM, WAS AS MUCH A *WARNING* AS IT WAS A PIECE OF FICTION...

...NOTES SCRAWLED IN THE MARGINS PRESENTING A *RIDDLE*...

...A RIDDLE THAT MIGHT VERY WELL ILLUMINATE *THE LAST ILLUSION*...

The Society of United Magicians Presents
AN EVENING OF MAGIC AND WONDER

Mysticism! Marvels! Magic!

Featuring the Return of the Great
Harry Houdini!

Orpheum Theatre
Los Angeles, California

...AND EXPLAIN WHY MAGICIANS MIGHT *KILL* FOR IT...

...OR KILL TO MAKE SURE IT *REMAINS* A MYSTERY.

ORPHEUM THEATRE.

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA.

AN EVENING OF MAGIC AND WONDER

COME, MISS LANE.

TIME TO MAKE AN *UNFORGETTABLE* ENTRANCE.

HONESTLY, I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU ENJOY *MORE*...

...THE *RUSH* YOU GET FIGHTING CRIME AS THE SHADOW OR THE *POMP AND CEREMONY* THAT COMES WITH BEING LAMONT CRANSTON.

EACH HAS ITS PLACE, MARGO.

BUT MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT.

LAMONT IS JUST A *MASK* I CHOOSE TO WEAR TO FURTHER MY MISSION AS *THE SHADOW.*

OH, LAMONT.

IT IS--

BEYOND WORDS?

NOT QUITE A *"WONDER OF THE WORLD"* BUT IT DOES WHAT IT CAN TO RIVAL THEM.

WONDERS INDEED.

THIS IS SURELY THE MOST ***MIRACULOUS*** PLACE YOU HAVE EVER TAKEN ME.

MIRACLES ARE WHAT WE'VE BEEN ***PROMISED,*** YES?

ENJOY THE VIEW WHILE YOU CAN.

BEFORE THIS NIGHT IS THROUGH, THE SHADOW WILL MAKE HIS PRESENCE KNOWN.

AH...YOU MAKE YOURSELF SOUND LIKE LEROUX'S ***PHANTOM.***

IS IT TOO MUCH TO ASK TO HAVE ONE NIGHT WITHOUT THE SHADOW SPOILING MY EVENING PLANS?

YOUR PLANS ***ARE*** THE SHADOW'S PLANS.

HOW COULD I FORGET?

YOU KNOW ME, LAMONT...

...ALWAYS THE WILLING AND ATTENTIVE AGENT.

WE SHOULD GET AWAY FROM NEW YORK MORE OFTEN.

WE COULD PUT THE CRANSTON NAME AND MONEY TO *GOOD USE.*

THERE IS NO BETTER USE THAN WEEDING OUT THE CRIMINAL ELEMENT FROM SOCIETY.

AND TO THAT END, EITHER AS LAMONT CRANSTON OR THE SHADOW, I SHALL TRAVEL TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.

YOU CERTAINLY HAVE A *KNACK* FOR TAKING THE *FUN* OUT OF AN EVENING.

NOW HUSH AND LET ME AT LEAST ENJOY *SOME* PART OF THIS NIGHT.

THE LIGHTS DIM.

THE CURTAINS COME UP.

A GASP PASSES THROUGH THE AUDIENCE...

...AS THEY ARE MET BY A *GHOSTLY PRESENCE.*

WELCOME, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN...

...TO WHAT WILL BE THE MOST *INCREDIBLE* EVENING OF YOUR *LIVES!*

THIS IS *NOT* THE SPIRIT OF MY TEACHER AND FRIEND.

PERHAPS YOU *RECOGNIZE* ME...

...ALTHOUGH IT HAS BEEN QUITE SOME TIME SINCE I PERFORMED BEFORE A *LIVE* AUDIENCE.

A SKILLED ACTOR.

MAKEUP THAT ENHANCES THE *DEATHLY PALLOR.*

A TRICK OF THE LIGHTING.

MY TIME AMONG THE *MORTALS* MAY BE LONG PASSED...

...BUT MY SKILLS HAVE NOT GROWN *STAGNANT* DURING MY TIME ON THE *OTHER SIDE!*

PERHAPS ONE DAY I CAN ESCAPE THE COLD EMBRACE OF *DEATH* AS *EASILY* AS I HAVE ESCAPED THESE *CHAINS!*

THIN WIRES HOLDING HIM ALOFT.

AN *ILLUSION,* OF COURSE.

AND NOW, I BID YOU GOOD NIGHT AS THE EVENT IS ABOUT TO BEGIN.

AS THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS *REAL* MAGIC.

TWO GROUPS OF MAGICIANS FEUD OVER AN *ARCHAIC MAGICAL ENIGMA.*

ONE--THE *SOCIETY OF UNITED MAGICIANS*--WOULD RESORT TO MURDER TO *UNLOCK* THE LAST ILLUSION...

...A SPELL SAID TO PREVENT *TRUE MAGIC* FROM SEEPING ONCE MORE INTO OUR WORLD.

THE OTHER GROUP... THE *DISCIPLES* OF THE LATE MADAME ARGYLE... WOULD LIKEWISE TAKE *RUTHLESS MEASURES* TO ENSURE THE LAST ILLUSION IS *NEVER* UNDONE.

THIS RIVALRY, I BELIEVE, WILL BLOSSOM INTO ALL-OUT *WAR*...

...TONIGHT... AT THIS EVENT.

MADAME ARGYLE'S LAST BREATH PROMISED AS MUCH.

GOOD HEAVENS, LAMONT.

THIS IS JUST AS THE BILL OF SALE SAYS.

"MAGIC AND WONDER" INDEED.

THE MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY ARE PRESENT...

...BUT THEY SEEM *UNSUSPECTING* OF ANY *PENDING DANGER.*

WHY, MR. CRANSTON...

...FROM THE TONE OF YOUR VOICE, I'D GUESS YOU'LL BE BIDDING ME *FAREWELL* SOON.

VERY *ASTUTE,* MISS LANE.

AS YOU KNOW...WE BOTH HAVE ROLES TO PLAY.

"THE RETURN OF HOUDINI."

ONE MUST WONDER IF THE SOCIETY OF UNITED MAGICIANS MADE SUCH A CLAIM TO *LURE* THEIR ENEMIES.

ENEMIES SUCH AS MYSELF...

...OR, THE FOLLOWERS OF NITOCRIS.

EITHER WAY... THEY ARE PLAYING WITH *FIRE.*

NO ADMITTANCE

AND NOT THE *ILLUSIONARY* KIND.

BOTH CABALS OF MAGICIANS TEMPT JUSTICE.

AND I, AS THE SERVANT OF JUSTICE, AM SORELY TEMPTED TO LET THEM KILL ONE ANOTHER.

BUT EVEN THE FAÇADE OF WAR CONCEALS *DEEPER SECRETS...*

...AND THE SHADOW WILL PLUMB THESE DEPTHS BEFORE HE IS DONE.

THIS FELLOW, LOVECRAFT... WAS NOT *UNLIKE* ME.

PRESENTED WITH SOMETHING HE DID NOT UNDERSTAND...

...IN THIS CASE, THE WORLD OF THE MAGICIAN HE WAS WRITING ABOUT...

...HE ENDEAVORED TO LEARN AS MUCH AS HE COULD.

LITTLE COULD HE HAVE KNOWN WHAT HIS THOROUGH EXAMINATION OF STAGE MAGIC WOULD UNCOVER.

WHAT HE FOUND MADE HIM FEEL *UNSAFE*...

...AS IF THE *KNOWLEDGE ITSELF* WAS *DANGEROUS*.

IT *HAUNTED* HIM.

SUCH WAS HIS DISMAY THAT HE WROTE TO HOUDINI...

...OFFERING GRAVE AND SINISTER TIDINGS.

AMUSED, IF NOT INTERESTED, HARRY ARRANGED FOR A PRIVATE MEETING WITH LOVECRAFT...

...DURING WHICH THE WRITER DETAILED FINDINGS THAT MIGHT HAVE COME STRAIGHT FROM ONE OF HIS STORIES.

THE LAST ILLUSION, HE SAID, COULD BE UNDONE.

REAL MAGIC--LIKE THE SORCERY OF VARDELL GOSCELIN--COULD BE BROUGHT BACK INTO THE WORLD.

BUT THERE'S A *PRICE.*

A *TERRIBLE* PRICE.

FOR IF MAGIC RETURNS...SO TOO DOES A *TERROR* FROM *BEYOND THE VEIL.*

HARRY...WHO WAS A CONFIRMED *UNBELIEVER*...MIGHT HAVE BEEN A LITTLE MORE *SENSITIVE* TO LOVECRAFT'S WORRIES.

WHETHER LOVECRAFT'S BELIEFS WERE FACTUAL...

...OR THE PRODUCT OF A TWISTED IMAGINATION...

...THE DANGERS SURROUNDING THE LAST ILLUSION ARE *QUITE REAL.*

POISON SLIPPED INTO ONE'S TEA IS AS *DEADLY* AS AN ARCANE INCANTATION.

A KILLER WITH A GUN OR KNIFE IS AS *LETHAL* AS AN ABYSSAL DEMON.

AND I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT THE SHADOW IS NOT THE *ONLY* UNINVITED GUEST LURKING IN THE THEATRE TONIGHT.

THERE ARE MORE *COMFORTABLE* SEATS, YOU KNOW.

BUT CERTAINLY THERE IS NO BETTER *VIEW* THAN THE ONE OFFERED HERE.

YOU DO, AFTER ALL, SEEM TO HAVE A PROCLIVITY FOR LOOKING DOWN FROM ROOFTOPS AND OTHER GARGOYLE-LIKE PERCHES.

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO HAVE THE TABLES TURNED?

MYSELF, I FIND IT *DISTASTEFUL...*

...SO ALLOW ME--

--TO *JOIN* YOU!

THE *PUTRID STENCH* OF *EVIL* DREW ME TO THESE RAFTERS.

IT IS NO SURPRISE THAT I FIND *YOU.*

"*PUTRID STENCH OF EVIL*"...

DO SUCH TURNS OF PHRASE HELP BOLSTER YOUR *RESOLVE?*

MY RESOLVE *NEVER* WAVERS.

THOSE WHO THRIVE LIKE PARASITES OFF THE BLOOD OF GOOD MEN AND WOMEN WILL ALWAYS FIND ME IN OPPOSITION TO THEM.

AND WHAT DO YOU PROPOSE TO DO WITH THOSE *PISTOLS* OF YOURS?

GUNFIRE IN A CROWDED THEATER?

THE RESULTING *PANIC* WOULD RESULT IN NUMEROUS INJURIES ATTRIBUTED *DIRECTLY* TO *YOUR* ACTIONS.

WOULDN'T IT BE WISER TO *TALK?*

AND WHAT IS IT YOU WOULD LIKE TO--

BAFF

NNNGH!

TYPICAL OF YOUR ILK.

SEEKING NOTHING MORE THAN AN OPPORTUNITY FOR *BETRAYAL.*

AND ONE YOU *WASTED* AT THAT.

WHUMP

NONSENSE... I DO NOT SEEK TO *HARM* YOU.

I COULD HAVE DONE SO IN A THOUSAND WAYS.

I SIMPLY FIND THAT A LITTLE *PHYSICAL EXERTION* LOOSENS A CONVERSATIONALIST'S *TONGUE.*

I KNOW THAT YOU RESCUED HOUDINI'S WIFE FROM THE SOCIETY OF UNITED MAGICIANS.

AN EVENT THEY WERE NONE TOO HAPPY ABOUT.

THRAK

BUT WHAT REALLY INTRIGUES ME IS WHAT BESS SHARED WITH--

UUGH!


SLAM
IT IS AS I THOUGHT.
WE HAVE *NOTHING* TO--
FWIP
CAN YOU SENSE IT, SANDMAN?
YES...

...WE ARE *NOT* *ALONE.*

PFFT

PFFT

AGH!

...THE INFAMOUS *SANDMAN*...

...THE *MAGICIAN ASSASSIN.*

I *KNEW* ONE DAY WE WOULD MEET.

AS YOU CAN IMAGINE, IT'S A *RELIEF* THAT I FOUND *YOU* BEFORE YOU FOUND *ME.*

AND THE LEGENDARY *SHADOW.*

I HALF EXPECTED YOU TO *TRULY* BE A *GHOST.*

YOUR *LOYALTY* TO HOUDINI AND HIS BRIDE DOES YOU *PROUD.*

I HOPE YOU ARE PREPARED TO TAKE THAT PRIDE WITH YOU TO THE *AFTERLIFE.*

ISSUE #5

ART BY BUTCH GUICE | COLORS BY ALEX GUIMARÃES

I HOPE YOU UNDERSTAND, I TAKE NO *PLEASURE* IN KILLING YOU.

I FIND THAT *DIFFICULT* TO BELIEVE.

ESPECIALLY STARING DOWN THE BARREL OF *MY OWN GUN.*

IT'S *TRUE!*

THE TWO OF US--WE ARE STRUGGLING AGAINST THE *SAME ENEMY.*

THE SOCIETY OF UNITED MAGICIANS.

Heh.

IT WOULD SEEM TO ME THAT OUR FRIEND THE SHADOW HOLDS BOTH MY SOCIETY *AND* YOURS...

...IN *EQUAL CONTEMPT.*

DO YOU THINK HE CANNOT TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A GROUP THAT WANTS TO *SAVE* THE WORLD...

...AND ONE THAT WANTS TO *DAMN* IT?

I CARE LITTLE FOR WHAT EITHER OF YOU HAVE TO SAY.

YOU BOTH HAVE *WICKED* SOULS...

...AND YOU WILL BE *PUNISHED.*

THERE YOU HAVE IT.

BAH!

IT DOES NOT MATTER.

TONIGHT, THE *DISCIPLES OF NITOCRIS* WILL STRIKE A TERRIBLE BLOW AGAINST OUR ENEMIES.

AND IN THIS, WE HAVE *RIGHTEOUSNESS* ON OUR SIDE.

THIS IS THE *TRUTH* OF THE *LAST ILLUSION.*

THIS IS THE WARNING LOVECRAFT TRIED TO OFFER HOUDINI IN LIFE.

AND IT IS THE *SAME* WARNING THAT HOUDINI, IN DEATH, DELIVERED TO HIS DEAR WIFE.

TRUE OR NOT...

...WHAT YOU ARE DOING HERE TONIGHT— IS *MADNESS!*

YOU WOULD DO *ANYTHING* TO SUCCEED IN YOUR CRUSADE AGAINST CRIME.

I WOULD DO ANYTHING TO SECURE OUR SAFETY AGAINST THE LAST ILLUSION.

WE'RE NOT SO DIFFERENT, YOU AND I.

IF THE SOCIETY WERE TO GET THEIR HANDS ON THE SECRET OF THE LAST ILLUSION...

...THEY WOULD USHER *TRUE MAGIC* BACK INTO THE WORLD...

...AND WITH IT...

"...THEY WOULD OPEN GATES THAT SHOULD REMAIN *FOREVER SEALED.*"

YOU'RE *WRONG.*

THERE ARE *INNOCENT* PEOPLE IN THE THEATER TONIGHT.

IF YOU *MURDER* EVERYONE--

YES, YES.

THE GOOD WITH THE BAD.

BUT *SACRIFICES* MUST BE MADE.

YOU USE A GUN...

...WHILE I WIELD LESS... *CONVENTIONAL* WEAPONS.

MAKE SURE ALL THE EXITS ARE CHAINED TIGHTLY.

YES, DROGMAN.

NO ONE LEAVES BEFORE OUR BUSINESS IS *FINISHED.*

PERHAPS YOU'D LIKE TO *WITNESS* WHAT WE HAVE PLANNED?

AFTER ALL, THE SOCIETY PROMISED AN EVENING OF *ENTERTAINMENT.*

WHO AM I TO DENY THEIR *FINAL WISHES?*

WELL IT IS YOU, AFTER ALL, THAT IS ADDING THE NOTE OF *FINALITY* TO THESE PROCEEDINGS.

YOU...

...STAY WITH THEM.

STAY *VIGILANT.*

FAREWELL FOR NOW, GENTLEMEN.

I HAVE BUSINESS TO ATTEND.

AND WHEN I RETURN, I SHALL MAKE SURE OUR DISCUSSIONS ARE BROUGHT TO A *SATISFACTORY* CONCLUSION.

MAKE SURE THEY DON'T TRY ANYTHING *TRICKY.*

YOU REALIZE THAT YOU TWO ARE *RUINING* MY NIGHT.

I FINALLY GET A JOB WITH A CREW MAKING A *BIG SPLASH.*

AND WHAT DO I GET TO DO?

I GET TO *BABYSIT* THE TWO OF YOU.

THERE ARE PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR A MAN SUCH AS YOURSELF TO BE A *PRODUCTIVE MEMBER* OF SOCIETY.

WHY HAVE YOU CHOSEN TO EMBRACE A LIFE OF *CRIME?*

YOU DON'T KNOW A THING ABOUT MY LIFE OR WHAT I HAVE DONE.

MY FATHER DIED WORKING ON THE DOCKS IN THIS CITY, LEFT ME AT ELEVEN TO FIND A WAY TO HELP MY MOM SURVIVE DAY TO DAY.

WHY DO YOU CALL YOURSELF *SHADOW* ANYWAY?

IF YOU WANT TO BE A SHADOW YOU SHOULDN'T WEAR THAT STUPID RED SCARF!

IT DOES NOT MATTER WHAT I WEAR.

YOUR KIND *NEVER* SEES ME COMING AS I STRIKE FROM THE DARKNESS.

BIG TALK FROM THE GUY TIED TO A--

GAAAHH!

WHAP

CLATTER

NOT SURE WHO THE HELL YOU ARE, BIMBO--

--BUT YOU JUST MADE THE *BIGGEST* MISTAKE OF YOUR LIFE.

KI-YA!

WHUMP

I WASN'T THE ONE *TALKING* WHEN I SHOULD HAVE BEEN *FIGHTING.*

NOT THAT YOU EVER STOOD A *CHANCE.*

CHOK

I KNEW YOU BROUGHT ME ALONG FOR A REASON.

NOW GIVE ME A HAND WITH THOSE ROPES.

MARGO, YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN AN AGENT I CAN COUNT ON.

I EXPECTED NO DIFFERENT FROM YOU TONIGHT.

AH--

A LITTLE *HELP* HERE?

HELLO?

DON'T *FORGET* ABOUT ME.

YOU HAVE A DECISION TO MAKE, SANDMAN.

YOU HAVE WALKED A THIN LINE.

TONIGHT YOU MUST CHOOSE TO FIGHT ON THE SIDE OF RIGHT.

INNOCENT LIVES ARE AT STAKE.

I NOW HAVE *UNFINISHED BUSINESS* TO TEND TO WITH THIS DROGMAN AND HIS FLUNKIES.

YOUR GOALS... MINE...

...ARE ONE IN THE SAME.

AHHH...

IT FEELS GOOD TO BE FREE ONCE MORE.

YOU MIGHT NEED THESE.

DO NOT MAKE ME *REGRET* MY DECISION.

YES.

THE AIR IS HEAVY WITH THE STINK OF *MURDEROUS INTENT*...

"...AND THERE WILL BE *BLOODSHED* TONIGHT!"

AND NOW, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN...

...FOR MY NEXT FEAT OF *PRESTIDIGITATION*--

AHH--

WHAT WAS THAT?

--PART OF THE ACT?

THE BLOOD LOOKS SO REAL.

GOOD EVENING, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

I'M AFRAID THERE HAS BEEN A CHANGE TO THE SCHEDULED PERFORMANCES TONIGHT.

THE REST OF THE EVENING'S ENTERTAINMENT SHALL BE--

--A *GRAND GUIGNOL!*

YEEAAGGH!

N-NO!

STAY BACK!

OPEN THE DOORS!

WE'RE LOCKED IN!

LET US OUT!

->GURGLE<-

SOMEBODY!

PLEASE! DON'T--

BLAM

WHO KNOWS WHAT EVIL LURKS WITHIN THE HEARTS OF MEN?

THE SHADOW KNOWS!

BLAM BLAM

THWAAP

IT SEEMS DROGMAN HAS A FLARE FOR THE *DRAMATIC*...

...EVEN WHEN HIS PURPOSE IS *MURDER!*

HE IS A *SHOWMAN* AFTER MY OWN HEART!

PROTECT AS MANY AS YOU CAN.

I SHALL *END* THIS.

NOW.

BLAM

BLAM

BLAM BLAM
BLAM BLAM

YOU THINK TO STOP US...

...TO SAVE THOSE WHO WOULD KILL YOU THEMSELVES IF THEY COULD.

BLAM BLAM BLAM

I SEEK ONLY *JUSTICE.*

YOU PERVERT AND TWIST A GREATER GOOD WITH YOUR OWN *HOMICIDAL DESIRES.*

YOU'RE ONE TO *TALK.*

THERE IS MORE BLOOD ON *YOUR* HANDS THAN MINE.

JUSTICE COMES FOR YOU, DROGMAN!

THE GOOD OF MANKIND TRUMPS YOUR PRECIOUS JUSTICE!

LIKE A SERPENT IN THE GRASS, JUSTICE IS EVER WATCHFUL...

...WAITING FOR THE MOMENT TO STRIKE.

OUR GOALS...

...ARE THE SAME...

...IF WE LET THEM SURVIVE...

...THEY'LL DESTROY EVERYTHING...

...THEY'LL AWAKEN...

...A GREAT EVIL--

HOUDINI'S SECRETS LED TO *WAR.*

A FEUD BETWEEN GANGS THE LIKES OF WHICH HAS NEVER BEEN SEEN.

TONIGHT THE WAR WAS BROUGHT TO AN END.

BUT AT WHAT COST?

WHO DIED HERE TONIGHT?

A TEACHER. A POLICEMAN. A DIPLOMAT.

AND A HANDFUL OF MAGICIANS WHO HUNGERED FOR *FORBIDDEN WISDOM.*

THE FUTURE IS *DARKER* FOR TONIGHT'S *BUTCHERY.*

I SAVED QUITE A FEW TONIGHT, SHADOW.

PERHAPS THE SCALES ARE *BALANCING.*

IT IS TIME, THOUGH, THAT I BID YOU *FAREWELL.*

THE AUTHORITIES ARE CERTAIN TO ARRIVE SOON, AND WE RARELY GET ON WELL.

PERHAPS YOUR GIFT FOR *HYPNOSIS* WOULD BE AS USEFUL AS YOUR GUNS.

I'M SURE NONE OF THESE POOR SURVIVORS WANT TO *REMEMBER* WHAT HAPPENED HERE TONIGHT.

SO, LAMONT...

IS THIS BUSINESS WITH THE *LAST ILLUSION* TRULY AT AN END?

AFTER THE ATTACK IN LOS ANGELES, THE SOCIETY OF UNITED MAGICIANS IS ALL BUT *DESTROYED.*

MANY CIVILIANS DIED, BUT IT SEEMED AS THOUGH THE ATTACKERS FOCUSED ON THE SOCIETY FIRST.

THOSE WHO ARE STILL ALIVE ARE BROKEN...

...AND SCATTERED IN THE WIND.

THEY HAVE HAD THEIR LAST *CURTAIN CALL.*

I HEARD WHAT DROGMAN SAID TO YOU ABOUT *BESS.*

IS IT TRUE?

THEY WERE AFTER HER BECAUSE *HOUDINI* SENT HER A MESSAGE FROM *BEYOND THE GRAVE?*

Aldous Huxley

Brave New World

COULD *REAL* MAGIC COME BACK INTO THE WORLD?

LIKE MERLIN AND WITCHCRAFT AND CONJURED DEMONS?

BESS DID INDEED RECEIVE A MESSAGE FROM HARRY.

AT LEAST, SHE *THOUGHT* SHE DID.

SHE NO LONGER HAS THAT KNOWLEDGE.

I *CLOUDED* THOSE DETAILS IN HER MEMORY.

BUT YOU KNOW THE *SECRET.*

YOU KNOW THE TRUTH...

...IF MAGIC IS REAL...

...IF IT CAN COME BACK...

...AND IF THE RETURN OF MAGIC MIGHT BRING BACK SOMETHING TERRIBLE.

TONIGHT, MY DEAR, I AM *LAMONT CRANSTON*...

...*NOT* THE SHADOW...

...AND LAMONT CRANSTON CAN THINK OF *BETTER* CONVERSATION TOPICS.

HA HAHA

HA HA HA HA

AS FOR THE *SECRET OF MAGIC...*

...OF THE *LAST ILLUSION...*

...IS IT *TRUE* OR SIMPLY MORE *MISDIRECTION?*

ONLY THE SHADOW KNOWS.

END

WHO KNOWS WHAT EVIL LURKS IN THE HEARTS OF MEN?

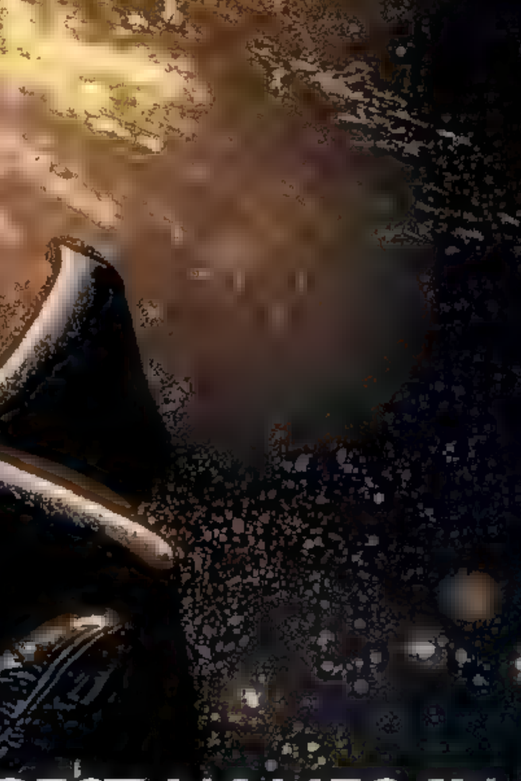
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– SNAP POW



The Shadow infiltrates the sanctum of The Society of United Magicians, an esoteric enclave of illusionists who are hell-bent on escaping the ultimate trap: death itself! Learning the secret of the so-called "Last Illusion" from the spirit of escape artist Harry Houdini himself, The Shadow becomes the next target of their murderous scheme. To thwart their plans, he must evade twisted traps and solve spellbinding puzzles, while simultaneously evading the deadly skills of Sandman, the magician assassin. A good (or evil) magician never reveals his secrets... but the Shadow knows!

RATED T+
SUGGESTED FOR TEENS AND UP

SUPERHERO

This volume collects the complete 5-issue mini-series by **Cullen Bunn** (***Deadpool***, ***Sinestro***) and fan favorite Shadow artist **Giovanni Timpano**, along with all of the covers by **Butch Guice** (***Captain America***). As an added bonus, it includes The Shadow #0 by **Cullen Bunn** and **Marc Rueda** (***The Lone Ranger***), featuring a cover by **Gabriel Hardman** (***Star Wars: Legacy)***!